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Teachers' Perception of Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom An Empirical Study on Italian FL and L2 Teachers

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Abstract Motivation can determine success or failure in second language learning process, however there is a limited number of published investigations dedicated to motivational strategies in a European context. The purpose of the present study is to replicate Cheng's and Dörnyei's (2007) research to test the validity of their findings in a different cultural milieu. 101 foreign language (FL) and second language (L2) teachers were asked to rate a list of 47 motivational strategies according based on the degree of importance they perceived. In addition, they were also invited to specify how they acquainted with each strategy. The results of the study suggest that, even though the use of motivational strategies is decidedly context-dependent, the prevailing importance of some strategies might be cross-cultural. In particular, strategies related to classroom climate could also be considered as preconditions to employ further strategies. The highest-rated strategies are also indicated as acquired mostly through experience, which highlights the far too little attention that motivational strategies have so far received in education programmes for the formation of language teachers.

Keywords L2 motivation. Motivational strategies. SLA. Language teachers education.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Methods. – 2.1 Participants. – 2.2 Instruments. – 2.3 Data Collection Procedures. – 2.4 Data Analysis. – 3. Results: Ten Commandments for Italian Teachers, a Comparison. – 4 Results: Acquisition of Motivational Strategies. – 5 Discussion. – 6 Limitations. – 7 Conclusions.



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1 Introduction

Motivation is at the same time one of the most important and most fascinating aspect of psychology, in that it is a determining factor in establishing how and why individuals think and behave in a specific way.

Within an educational context, the importance of motivation is often undervalued until teachers start noticing that students lack for it – which usually happens long after it has gone. As Dörnyei puts it,

[w]ithout sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula or good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement. On the other hand, high motivation can make up for considerable deficiencies both in one's language aptitude and learning conditions. (Dörnyei, Ryan 2015, 72)

Within the study of Second Language Acquisition, L2 motivation research has proved, and still does, one of the most interesting areas of research. Since its inception in the late fifties, scholarly efforts have mostly focused on what motivation is rather than on how teachers can use it as an educational tool to improve learning.

In the last twenty years, however, more and more studies have investigated the impact that motivating behaviours have on the classroom (see Boo et al. 2015). The turning point in the research can be located at the beginning of the nineties, when Crookes and Schmidt (1991) asked for the reopening of the research agenda to bring L2 motivation up to date and catch up on cognitive psychological concepts. At around the same time, Skehan pointed out the need for a pragmatical approach "[to] the effects of different materials and teaching techniques on the motivation of students" (1991, 281). In 1994, a debated started on the pages of *The Modern Language Journal*, in which the importance of providing teachers with effective motivational strategies was suggested as a valid method both to motivate students and "make L2 motivation research more 'education-friendly'" (Dörnyei 1994a, 283), that is "congruent with the concept of motivation that teachers are convinced is critical for [second language] success" (Crookes, Schmidt 1991, 502, quoted in Dörnyei 1994a, 283).

Dörnyei (1994a) suggested a list of motivational strategies based on his own experience as well as on that of other researchers. Gardner and Tremblay (1994a) suggested that, whereas Dörnyei's strategies were indeed valuable, they should "be considered hypotheses that could be tested in the context of the second language acquisi-

tion" (364). Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) took on the challenge and conducted an empirical study on English language teachers in Hungary to identify the techniques that Hungarian teachers considered more motivating for their students, the so-called Ten Commandments.

Building upon the results thus gathered, Dörnyei developed an extended collection of motivational strategies, which he then presented in his 2001 volume, *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. The study included more than 100 strategies, subdivided into different stages of teaching according to Dörnyei and Otto (1998)'s framework.

Despite the seminal contribution of Dörnyei's studies and the call to validate the strategies in different cultural, ethnolinguistic and institutional settings (Dörnyei, Csizér 1998, 224), for several years the answers to the call for further empirical studies were rather scarce.² Almost ten years later, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) replicated the study in Taiwan. After that, other researchers followed, but, to date, only 18 studies based on Dörnyei and colleagues' work have been published. Of these,

- 10 in East Asia (i.e. You 2004 in China; Cheng, Dörnyei 2007 in Taiwan; Guilloteaux, Dörnyei 2008, and Guilloteaux 2013 in South Korea; Sugita, Takeuchi 2010, Narikawa, Okazaki 2011, Manning, Henneberry, Kobayashi 2012, and Sugita McEown, Takeuchi 2014 in Japan; Hapsari 2013 in Indonesia; Wong 2014 in Hong Kong);
- 7 in the Middle East (i.e. Alrabai 2011, 2014 and 2016, Moskovsky et al. 2013, in Saudi Arabia; Al-Mahrooqi et al. 2012 in Oman; Papi, Abdollahzaleh 2012, and Ghadiri Vala, Vahdani Sanavi 2015 in Iran);
- 1 in the United States (i.e. Ruesch, Bown, Dewey 2012).

Most of these studies focused on the identification of Ten Commandments applicable to each different context, in particular by analysing the perceived importance of motivational strategies. In some cases, along with their perceived frequency of use (see for instance Cheng, Dörnyei 2007; Narikawa, Okazaki 2011; Al-Mahrooqi et al. 2012; Guilloteaux 2013; Ghadiri Vala, Vahdani Sanavi 2015). In other cases, by comparing how teachers and students perceive specific strategies (Sugita, Takeuchi

² Madrid (2002) investigated how teachers and pupils perceived 18 generic motivational strategies, and Bell (2005) asked teachers to complete a questionnaire on effective FL teaching techniques (incidentally, the questionnaire never mentioned motivation) that could be linked to the other mentioned studies. The only exception is You's study (2004), which collects the views of 130 Chinese university students on motivational strategies and on how these affected the achievement of their goals. This study did not derive from the Hungarian research. Still, however, the questionnaire was based on the strategies collected in Dörnyei 2001.

2010; Manning et al. 2012; Ruesch et al. 2012). A smaller amount of studies focused on how specific strategies affected the level of motivation in students (Guilloteaux, Dörnyei 2008; Papi, Abdollahzaleh 2012; Moskovsky et al. 2013; Alrabai 2014; Sugita McEown, Takeuchi 2014; Wong 2014) or on their language proficiency level (Alrabai 2016).

Although research on motivational strategies has yielded notable results, it is still limited to a small number of teaching/learning cultural milieus. Future researchers should focus on covering new contexts in order to improve the feasibility of strategies. Such contexts include:

- Second language (L2) classrooms. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) chose to investigate motivational strategies in Hungary, that is a monolingual and monocultural country "where foreign languages are taught primarily as a school subject with limited contact with L2 Speakers" (Dörnyei, Ushioda 2011, 43). This study proved seminal, and all which followed have focused entirely on foreign language (FL) teaching.
- Foreign languages other than English (FLOTE) classrooms. Until now, only one study (Ruesch, Bown, Dewey 2012) has investigated several (seven) different FLOTE classes.
- After Dörnyei and Csizér's 1998 study in Hungary, no investigation on the topic has shifted back the focus on Europe, a peculiar setting where language learning is widespread, highly valued, and promoted starting from primary education. In more than twenty European countries, pupils are taught at least two foreign languages at school; in most of these countries, FL are compulsory subjects for pupils aged 6 to 9 (Devlin 2015). It is not uncommon, especially in EU countries, for young people to be expected to master at least one of the main European languages (English, French, German, Spanish or, to a lesser extent, Italian), 4 which they have been taught at school. In addition to this, Europe is subject to a continuous process of immigration and internal migration from one state to another not to mention Communitarian programmes supporting cultural exchanges (e.g. Comenius, Erasmus) or training abroad (e.g. Leonardo).

Following in the steps of Dörnyei and colleagues, we replicate Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) study and apply it to a European context, including EFL, FLOTE and Italian as L2 teachers.

³ A rather different context compared to the bilingual, multicultural setting of Canada, which inspired the seminal theories of Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972; Gardner 1985, 2010), who saw L2 as a mediating factor between different communities and, consequently, the urge to integrate as one of the main factors in L2 motivation.

⁴ Cf. Eurostat's Foreign Language Learning Statistics. URL https://bit.ly/1z1YZKe (2019-05-08).

2 Methods

The chief/main goal of the present study is to explore the perception of motivational strategies among Italian teachers. In order to do so, this research focuses on:

- investigating the attitudes of Italian teachers toward the importance of motivational strategies by means of a question-naire based on Cheng's an Dörnyei's 2007 study. The results have been compared to seven similar studies;
- 2. investigating how teachers experience the acquisition of the same motivational strategies, with a view to understand the role of Language Teacher Education (LTE) in developing awareness of the usefulness of motivational strategies.

2.1 Participants

The participants were 101 language teachers (81 females, 20 males), working in a range of different contexts as shown in [Table 1]. Respondents were both EFL (N = 40), FLOTE (N = 31)⁶ and L2 (N = 30) teachers, and had wide differences in age and teaching experiences. 9,9% of the sample (N = 10) were native FL teachers.

Table 1 Participants' (N = 101) teaching contexts		
Teaching contexts	N	Percentage
Primary education (age 5~13)	20	19,8 %
Secondary education (age 14~18)	38	37,6 %
University	20	19,8 %
Private language school and tutoring	23	22.8 %

2.2 Instruments

A questionnaire was created, based on Cheng, Dörnyei's (2007) list of 48 strategies. Items were first literally translated by a native Italian professional translator. Then, a second pragmatic translation was commissioned to a native Italian teacher working in England. Finally, the two translators and the author brainstormed to choose the most linguistically accurate and natural-sounding version of each item. Af-

⁵ See Appendix 1.

⁶ FLOTE teachers included the following languages: Spanish (N = 6), French (N = 6), German (N = 5), Japanese (N = 5), Chinese (N = 2), Portuguese (N = 1) and Italian as FL (N = 6).

ter piloting the questionnaire with 7 language teachers, a few items were reworded for clarity or merged together, for a total of 47 items

The questionnaire invited respondents to complete two main tasks:

- to rank the 47 motivational strategies on a six-point semantic differential scale according to the degree of perceived importance (not important → very important);
- 2. to report their experience of the acquisition of the very same strategies, choosing between four options (no experience, personal baggage, through education, through experience).

The pilot showed no influence between the two questions, hence participants completed them both.

The questionnaire also included some demographic questions on the educational background and working experiences of the respondents. In addition, teachers were asked to provide an example of motivational strategy they regularly use.

2.3 Data collection procedures

An online survey was chosen as the best way to reach as many teachers as possible and to achieve a 100% completion rate. We contacted the respondents using a snowball sampling method. An e-mail that included instructions and a link to the survey was sent to an initial group of language teachers from different Italian regions, with different working experience, and with no connection to one another. They were also invited to forward the e-mail to other potentially interested teachers.

2.4 Data analysis

The obtained data were submitted to a number of statistical analysis using IBM SPSS v.20. The Cronbach's alpha of the 47 items indicated a high reliability of the scale ($\alpha = 0.947$). We then calculated the mean of the perceived importance scores for each strategy, and finally grouped the items in clusters (that is macrostrategies) based on three criteria:

- a factorial analysis using Principal Components Analysis and rotation (Varimax with Kaiser normalisation) to find an initial set of factors:
- a rearrangement based on the items belonging to the same conceptual domain;
- 3. the internal consistency of each cluster was calculated, and a strategy was added to a cluster as long as this increased its

Cronbach's alpha. Strategies that could not be added to any group were treated as single-item clusters.

This method is slightly different from that used in the original study (Cheng, Dörnyei's 2007 investigation was not based on a factorial analysis), but this choice of data analysis granted a higher degree of reliability for the clusters and all except two present a solid internal consistency ($\alpha > 0.8$).

As a result, seven multi-item clusters were formed, and three strategies remained as single-item clusters.

Since a 'marginal' item might have exerted an excessive negative influence on the mean score for the whole cluster (Cheng, Dörnyei 2007, 160-1), macrostrategies were ranked according to the mean score but excluding the items whose rating mean was 0.5 points lower than the cluster's mean and whose standard deviation was relatively high (SD > 1.3). [Table 2] presents the ranking of the ten macrostrategies thus obtained.

Table 2 Ten commandments to motivate language students in Italy, with weighted mean score (M) and Cronbach's alpha (α) for each macrostrategy. (* indicates single-item macrostrategies)

- 1. Climate: Create a friendly and pleasant atmosphere in the classroom (M = 5.465 α = 0.738)
- 2. **Interest**: Make tasks more stimulating, engaging, and enjoyable (M = $5.156 \alpha = 0.833$)
- 2. L2 values: Promote the interest toward the target language and its related cultural values $(M = 5.156 \alpha = 0.719)$
- 4. *Avoid comparison: Avoid any comparison of students to one another (M = 5.099)
- 5. **Group**: Promote group works and activities that involve all the students (M = $5.066 \alpha = 0.803$)
- 6. **Support**: Encourage students and help them achieve their learning goals (M = 4.904α = 0.823)
- 7. *Be yourself: Act naturally in front of students (M = 4.812)
- 8. *Share experiences: Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts (M = 4.693)
- 9. Responsibilization: Help students to be autonomous and responsible for their own learning $(M = 4.571 \alpha = 0.836)$
- 10. **Rules**: Establish a set of classroom rules that students agree upon (M = $4.490 \alpha = 0.802$)

The results for each individual strategy in the importance survey (in the English translation) can be found in [Appendix 1].

⁷ In Cheng, Dörnyei (2007) some clusters produced a very low alpha score ($\alpha < 0.6$), "but even with short scales of 3-4 items we should aim at reliability coefficients in excess of 0.70; if the Cronbach alpha of a scale does not reach 0.60, this should sound warning bells" (Dörnyei 2003, 112).

3 Results: Ten Commandments for Italian Teachers, a Comparison

The Ten Commandments for Italian teachers found in the present study were compared to those used in the studies by Cheng, Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan; Dörnyei, Csizér (1998) in Hungary; Narikawa, Okazaki (2011) in Japan; Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2012) in Oman; Ruesch et al. (2012) in the United States; Guilloteaux (2013) in South Korea, and Ghadiri, Vahdani (2015) in Iran.

Since those studies used different clustering methods,⁸ the final macrostrategies are slightly different from each other.

The cluster 'Teacher' ("set a personal example with your own behaviour") – ranked as the most important macrostrategy in most of the studies – and the single-item cluster 'Rapport' ("develop a good relationship with your students"), present in three studies, are both included in the cluster 'Climate' in the present study.

Two new macrostrategies are introduced in the present study: 'Support' and 'Responsibilization'. The former includes strategies that aim to encourage the learners to commit to their goals – which includes recognising a student's efforts, giving positive feedbacks, and providing examples of successful learning. This cluster might also be assimilated to the clusters 'Effort' ("recognise a student's effort") and 'Self Confidence' ("promote learners' linguistic self-confidence") included in previous studies. 'Responsibilization' is a broader macrostrategy than the analogous cluster 'Autonomy' ("promote the learner's autonomy") and includes strategies to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, to set their own realistic goals, and to take part in decision-making on course content, goals and assessment.

[Table 3] shows a simplified comparison between the perceived importance of motivational macrostrategies in eight similar studies (some macrostrategies may be missing due to different clustering methods).

⁸ Narikawa, Okazaki (2011), Ruesch et al. (2012) and Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2012) avoided any clustering process and grouped items using the same macrostrategies of the original studies.

⁹ Dörnyei, Csizér 1998; Narikawa, Okazaki 2011; Ruesch et al. 2012.

Table 3 Teachers' perceived import	ance ranks of motivational macrostrategies
(* indicates single-item macrostrate	gies)

Study	Cucinotta 2018	Cheng, Dörnyei 2007	Dörnyei, Csizér 1998	Narikawa, Okazaki 2011	AlMahrooqi et al. 2012	Ruesch et al. 2012	Guilloteaux 2013	Ghadiri, Vahdani 2015
Sample (nation)	101	176	116	86	286	30	135	80
	(Italy)	(Taiwan)	(Hungary)	(Japan)	(Oman)	(USA)	(S. Korea)	(Iran)
Clusters	10(3)	10(none)	18(8)	18(8)	10(none)	17	12(5)	10(none)
(of which single-item)						(not indicated)		
Climate	1	1+4	1+2	1+5	1+6	1+2	1+9	1
Interest	2	7	6	6	5	11	11	4
L2 values	2	8	10	9	7	7	10	9
*Avoid comparison	*4	in #4	*18	*11	in #6	*3	in #9	in #3
Group	5	9	11	10	9	13	9	2
Support	6	2+3	5	3	2+3	5	2+3	6+5
*Be yourself	*7	in #1	in #1	in #1	in #1	in #2	*5	in #1
*Share experiences	*8	in #9	in #10	in #12	in #9	in #15	in #9	in #2
Responsibilization	9	10+6	6	7	10+8	8	12+2	10+8
Rules	10	9	15	16	9	/	9	3

Comparing the Ten Commandments of Italy to those of other countries, we can observe a few striking differences.

The Italian study shows how 'Interest' and 'L2 values' were ranked significantly higher than in other studies. The production of interesting and stimulating tasks never reaches the top of the ranking. It is not a case that, when asked to provide an example of motivational strategy, in most of the cases (69 on 101 respondents) teachers indicated strategies that focused on eliciting interest in the learners.

'L2 values' ("promote the interest of the students toward the target language and its related cultural values") has never been placed in the top half of the ranking in other studies. This could be ascribed to the inclusion of FLOTE and L2 teachers, who are likely to put more emphasis on cultural aspects than EFL teachers (cf. Lamb 2004, 5 and Dörnyei, Ryan 2015, 78-9). However, a one-way Anova testing for differences between teachers' categories (EFL, FLOTE and L2) did not produce any significant difference in the scores of 'L2 values' cluster.

An outstanding result concerns the 'Climate' cluster, which appears to be perceived as important in all studies. This result confirms Dörnyei's (2001) classification of motivational strategies, which considered a supportive atmosphere, positive group dynamics, and appropriate teacher's behaviour as indispensable preconditions to successfully employ any further strategies. Bernaus and Gardner

(2008), who investigated the use of motivational strategies in Spain, also came to the conclusion that the attitude toward the learning situation influences achievement independently from the use of motivational strategies (398). This study also suggests that "it is not the actual use of strategies but their perceived use that has an effect on motivation and achievement" (399).¹⁰ It is that strategies are effective only when students recognise them and perceive them as useful, but this is not assured when students are not in a good relationship with the teacher, do not appreciate the strategies he/she uses, or they do not feel much interest in the subject (399).

In a recent study, Lamb and Wedell (2015) asked 279 learners in Guangzhou (China) and Jakarta (Indonesia) to describe inspiring teachers they had had in school. The aim was to investigate human and pedagogical commonalities among the inspiring teachers that had had a long-term motivational effect on students.

Almost one-third of the respondents did not praise what teachers did, but rather their general attitude and they ability to create relationships with learners. The results confirm what Csikszentmihalyi (cited in Lamb, Wedell 2015, 220) said:

those [teachers] who are remembered, who made a difference in the way we see ourselves and the world, who stirred us in new directions, and who revealed unexpected strengths in us or made us aware of our limitations [...] were usually the ones who loved what they were doing, who showed by their dedication and their passion that there was nothing else on earth they would rather be doing. (Csikszentmihalyi 1997, 79)¹¹

That is to say, teachers' behaviour is one of the most important crosscultural characteristics to have a long-term motivational influence on students.

4 Results: Acquisition of Motivational Strategies

The second part of the questionnaire focused on experience, whereas most of the studies on which the present research relies concentrated on the frequency of use of the various strategies. This decision was based on the consideration that frequency of use does not necessarily yield significant information on the value of a strategy

¹⁰ Cf. also Guilloteaux, Dörnyei 2008.

¹¹ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (1997). "Intrinsic Motivation and Effective Teaching: a Flow Analysis". Bess, James L. (ed.), *Teaching Well and Liking It: Motivating Faculty to Teach Effectively*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 72-89.

or on its effectiveness: some strategies may be used at any time (e.g. S06 "Give clear instructions about how to carry out a task") while some others, by their very nature, should be used *cum grano salis* or just in particular stages of the course (e.g. S19 "Invite some natives as guest speakers to the class" or S47 "Give students opportunities to assess themselves").

In a recent study in Korea, Maeng and Lee (2015) found that more experienced teachers did not use motivational strategies as often as their younger colleagues did, which suggests that being able to choose the right strategy at the right time might prove more effective than the repeated use of a vast range of strategies.

The purpose of the question on experience was to understand the extent to which motivational strategies are acquired through a specific educational process. Teachers consider motivation of the students as the most influencing factor on successful language learning (see Cucinotta 2017, 9-10), and "a transformation of classroom practice has to begin with the teachers, because they are the people in the best position to shape classroom life" (Dörnyei, Kubanyiova 2014, 3). Two recent quasi-experimental studies in Saudi Arabia (Moskovsky et al. 2013 and Alrabai 2016) showed a link between a teacher's behaviour and their students' degree motivation and achievements.

Therefore, educational institutions responsible for training future teachers should include both theories and strategies of motivation in their curricula. The very same teachers appear to share this point of view. When asked if motivational strategies should be included in Language Teacher Education (LTE) programmes, 100% of respondents (N = 101) gave a positive answer.

- Cucinotta (2018b) proposes a model in which each teacher's personal theory is developed by incorporating both public and private theories as shown in [fig. 1]. In particular, the acquisition of theories occurs through three major channels:
 - personal baggage of experiences, beliefs, and mental constructions, including those emerged throughout their schooling:
 - formal education (public theories);
 - personal experience, the analysis of one's own observations on practice, or the sharing and comparing of one's own personal 'operational' ideas with other teachers.

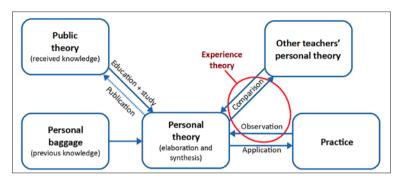


Figure 1 Scheme of acquisition of theory by language teachers

The present study asked teachers to choose among these three options the main channel through which they acquainted themselves with each of the 47 motivational strategies. The results, aggregated in macrostrategies, are shown in [Table 4] (single item statistics in Appendix 2).

Table 4	Statistics on the acquisition of the ten macrostrategies
by Italia	on teachers

by italian teachers				
	None	Personal baggage	Through education	Through experience
Climate	2.48%	55.94%	6.19%	35.40%
Interest	4.95%	16.17%	37.51%	41.36%
L2 values	8.66%	30.20%	21.29%	39.85%
*Avoid comparison	11.88%	43.56%	9.90%	34.65%
Group	4.95%	15.51%	39.60%	39.93%
Support	10.64%	32.92%	15.72%	40.72%
*Be yourself	8.91%	54.46%	3.96%	32.67%
*Share experiences	9.90%	24.75%	12.87%	52.48%
Responsibilization	22.28%	12.77%	33.47%	31.49%
Rules	27.23%	12.38%	22.28%	38.12%
TOTAL	11.31%	25.45%	25.17%	38.07%

As a result, experience appears to be the main channel through which teachers acquire motivational strategies.

Most of the strategies (25 out of 47) are considered as acquired principally through experience (see Appendix 2). This option prevailed on the other channels in several macrostrategies as 'Interest', 'L2 values', 'Share experiences', 'Group', 'Support' and 'Rules'. Only 6 items received less than 30% of votes for this option, and all of them are part of the 'Responsibilization' cluster.

In the last decade, several studies¹² confirmed the existence of a strong relationship between autonomy and motivation. Of these studies a few assert that the former triggers the latter (see Little 2007, 17), or that they exert a mutual influence all along the learning process (see Spratt, Humphreys, Chan 2002 262). Nevertheless, Responsibilization's items are those with the lowest perceived importance. This macrostrategy is the only cluster indicated as acquired mainly through formal education.

Education results the main option only in 8/47 strategies (see Appendix 2), of which 5 are part of the 'Responsibilization' cluster, although several strategies belonging to 'Group' and 'Interest' clusters were also indicated as gained through education.

Personal baggage was indicated as the main acquisition channel of 10/47 strategies (see Appendix 2). Italian teachers pointed at their personal cultural and experiential baggage as the main channel to acquire motivational strategies, especially those concerning a teacher's attitude and their ability to build and maintain interpersonal relationship with their pupils ('Climate', '*Avoid comparison', '*Be yourself', and 'Support').

5 Discussion

The first question in the study deals with how teachers perceive the importance of motivational strategies. In the Italian Ten Commandments, the second position of 'Interest' cluster in joint place with 'L2 values' cluster is noteworthy when compared to the results reported in all the other studies taken into account. Both macrostrategies had never held high positions in previous studies. We may just infer that those strategies are possibly cultural-specific and connected with what Johnson (2006) calls the 'Located L2 teacher education' – a combination of geopolitical, socio-political, sociohistorical, and socioeconomic elements that mould the context where L2 teachers study and train, and consequently defines their teaching style in the classroom.

On the other hand, Italian teachers indicated 'Climate' as the most important macrostrategy (by far). The outcome confirms the findings of other empirical studies (see [Table 3]) conducted across a variety of social and cultural contexts.¹³

The importance that teachers attached to those strategies related to class atmosphere and teacher's behaviour may be inflated by

¹² See Spratt, Humphreys, Chan 2002; Little 2007; Campbell, Duncan 2007; Üstünlüoğlu 2009.

¹³ Though, in many cases, their top-of-the-list macrostrategy focused more on teacher behaviour than climate in general.

self-enhancement bias in the very same teachers – teachers, that is, might attribute success in motivating their students to their own behaviour, and failures to external factors. However, the outcomes of Ruesch et al. 2011 and Manning et al. 2012 (based on Dörnyei surveys but administered to students)¹⁴ show that learners agree on the paramount importance of 'Climate'-related strategies in the development and enhancement of motivation in learners.

As previously stated, this perception, shared among very different contexts, allows to place those strategies as preconditions to employ any further strategies (cf. Dörnyei 2001).

The second question in the study concerns teachers' acquisition of motivational strategies. Outcomes show that in many cases, experience is considered the main channel for the acquisition of motivational strategies. In a further question, teachers were asked to report what they regarded as the most formative experiences in their educational path. More than a half of the respondents indicated practice and open discussion with other teachers as having a significant impact on their becoming good teachers as reported in [Table 5].

Table 5 Participants' (N = 101) views on the most important experiences in their formation as language teachers (teachers may have chosen more than one experience)

than one experience,		
Meaningful experiences	N	Percentage
High school education	18	8,7%
Bachelor's and master's course	49	23,6%
Professional master*	26	12,5%
Public school teacher education (i.e. SSIS, TFA)	16	7,7%
Private courses, workshops and seminars	42	20,2%
Practice and open discussion with other teachers	57	27,4%

^{*}in Italy some universities offer skill-oriented courses aimed at increasing students' professional competence outside the Bachelor and Master structure

Results also provide further evidence of the special status of those strategies related to teacher's behaviour and classroom climate. Indeed, the vast majority of respondents indicated 'Climate'-related strategies as part of their personal baggage, acquired before they started any L2 teacher education process.

In Ushioda's (2009) theory of person-in-context, relational skills serve as the basis to set up a motivating learning environment. This theory stresses the idea that a teacher's tasks extend far beyond the

¹⁴ A forthcoming study by the Cucinotta (in preparation A) on student's perception also confirms the same conclusion.

application of simplified models or generic motivational strategies; it is instead an ongoing interaction process between unique and distinct individuals (cf. Ushioda 2012).

6 Limitations

It is necessary to recognise two important limitations in the present study. First, the final sample was not comprehensively representative of the social composition of the teaching population in Italy. As well as many other studies, ¹⁵ the present investigation includes a broad variety of teaching contexts; the distribution of the final sample was determined by availability rather than by any systematic intention to compare populations. The subsamples of EFL, FLOTE and L2 teachers were too small to detect significant statistical differences.

These limitations call for follow-up studies in more situated contexts, concentrating on different homogeneous samples.

The second limitation in this study concerns the questionnaire, which was designed to gather mostly quantitative data, thus preventing respondents from explaining why they gave more importance to certain items.

Similarly, if the question on teachers' experience had been openended, answers would have been probably more nuanced, in that some strategies might have been acquired through more channels in varying degrees.

These limitations call for follow-up studies in more situated contexts, concentrating on different homogeneous samples.

Future studies might include different approaches and sources (e.g. class observations, open-ended questions) in order to triangulate both quantitative and qualitative data so as to provide more reliable measures.

Lastly, considering the small number of studies¹⁶ that included students' point of views, future research should also focus on learners' perception to better understand the impact of strategies that "to be effective in influencing students' attitudes and motivation, [..] must be perceived as such by the students" (Bernaus, Gardner 2008, 399).

¹⁵ Only three studies focused on a specific context: Narikawa, Okazaki 2011 (EFL teachers from one Japanese middle and high school, students aged 12-18), Guilloteaux 2013 (EFL teachers from South Korean middle and high schools, students aged 13-19) and Ruesch et al. 2012 (FL teachers from one American college, students aged 18-28); the latter, however, included a heterogeneous sample of teachers of different FLs.

¹⁶ You 2004; Sugita, Takeuchi 2010; Manning, Henneberry, Kobayashi 2012; Ruesch et al. 2012.

7 Conclusions

This study investigates the importance that 101 Italian FL and L2 teachers attach to a set of motivational strategies derived from Cheng's and Dörnyei's 2007 survey. Results confirm the importance of promoting a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere and reinforce the idea that interpersonal relationships and positive classroom climate are generally regarded as cross-cultural factors that deeply influence learners' motivation, also on the long run (cf. Lamb, Wedell 2015).

On the other hand, outcomes suggest that not all strategies are perceived as important, but rather their importance varies according to different contexts. Practices related to 'Interest' ("making tasks more stimulating"), 'L2 values' ("promote the interest toward the target language and its related cultural values") are valued more by Italian teachers, which might be due to the sociocultural context of education in Italy.

Results also show that in many cases, experience is considered as the main channel of acquisition for motivational strategies. Yet, this result might also be interpreted as a lack of consideration toward those institutions responsible for language teachers' education, which are not perceived as providing enough guidance on motivational practices, with few exceptions.

As stressed in Cucinotta 2017, teachers tend to consider motivation as a pivotal influencing factor in language learning. When we consider that teachers asked for the inclusion of motivational strategies in LTE curricula, it seems that teachers felt a discrepancy between theory received and what they need in classroom practice (cf. Williams 1999, 14). Consequently, in light of such results, educational institutions should reflect more on meeting the needs of future teachers, as well as concentrate more on practice, techniques, and the development of analytical skills such as reflective practice (see Wallace 1991) and action research as essential element of a teacher's training.

If teachers were better trained on the importance of motivation – and by this, I mean not only its positive and negative impact on learners, but also how it can be used as an effective teaching tool – they would probably choose to use motivational strategies and so be responsible for Students' motivations and not only for their learning outcomes.

Even though motivational strategies cannot turn anyone into a super-teacher or a super-motivator (see Dörnyei 2001, 135-6), these practices play a paramount role in the promotion of a successful language learning process, provided that they are used with an eye on their actual application potential as well as on the following caveats:

1. No teacher can *control* any student's motivation (see Ushioda 2012, 17). Research on motivating students is essential-

ly based on the quality of motivational strategies, that is on their perceived importance, their frequency of use (as shown in Dörnyei, Csizér 1998 and derived studies), or even on their efficacy on students' motivation. No study has ever proved other than the influence of teachers' attitude and choices on students' motivations. The aim of using motivational strategies is to facilitate learning, not control students.

- Researchers including Dörnyei himself have emphasised the fact that motivational strategies are not universal nor indeed effective in all classrooms. The 'commandments' produced by different studies are to be considered more as a guideline to adapt to different contexts to produce the desired results.
- 3. Consequently, sensitivity, attention and responsiveness are essential factors in the motivation of students. It goes without saying, however, that the employment of a wide range of strategies is also needed. Comparative and quantitative studies like the present investigation provide empirical data that may guide and support the selection of the most suitable techniques to include in future LTE programmes.

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¹⁷ Some studies investigated the effects of motivational strategies on students' perceived motivation (e.g. Guilloteaux, Dörnyei 2008; Papi, Abdollahzaleh 2012; Wong 2014); two quasi-experimental studies tested causal influences of motivational strategies on student's level of motivation (Moskovsky et al. 2013) and achievements (Alrabai 2016).

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Appendix 1 Final rank order of the macrostrategies with constituent items from the importance section of the questionnaire (N = 101, α = 0,947) with main scores (M) and standard deviations (SD). Macrostrategies' descriptive statistics, including Cronbach's alpha (α), are unweighted (the original questionnaire was written in Italian)

Macrostrategies and constituent items	М	SD
CLIMATE (α = 0.738): Create a friendly and pleasant atmosphere in the classroom	5.465	0.869
S23. Establish a good relationship with your students.	5.772	0.487
S30. Create a supportive and pleasant classroom climate where students are free from embarrassment and ridicule.	5.772	0.508
S02. Show students that you respect, accept and care about each of them.	5.485	0.782
S01. Bring in and encourage humour and laughter frequently in your class.	4.832	1.158
INTEREST (α = 0.851): Make the tasks more stimulating, engaging and enjoyable	5.041	1.061
S18. Break the routine of the lessons by varying presentation format (e.g. a grammar task can be followed by focusing on pronunciation; a whole-class lecture can be followed by group work).	5.495	0.702
S12. Introduce in your lessons various interesting content and topics that students are likely to find interesting (e.g. TV programmes, music, celebrities or travelling).	5.426	0.766
S45. Enrich the channel of communication by presenting various auditory and visual aids such as pictures, listenings, videos, films, magazines, websites, etc.	5.406	0.885
S43. Make tasks attractive by including novel or fantasy elements so as to raise the learners' curiosity.	5.099	0.854
S11. Design tasks and homework that are within the learners' ability so that they get to experience success regularly.	5.050	1.033
S26. Try and find out about your students' needs, goals and interests, and then build these into your curriculum as much as possible.	4.980	1.000
S27. Allow students to create products that they can display or perform (e.g. a poster, an information brochure, a school newspaper, a radio programme, etc.).	4.901	1.162

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S13. Make tasks and homework challenging by including some activities that require students to solve problems or discover something (e.g. puzzles).	4.891	1.019
S21. Use short and interesting opening activities to start each class (e.g. fun games).	4.119	1.329
L2 VALUES (α = 0.733): Promote the interest toward the target language and its related cultural values	5.041	1.153
S39. Motivate your students by increasing the amount of FL/L2 you use in class.	5.416	0.875
S17. Show your enthusiasm for language teaching by being committed and dedicated.	5.307	1.037
S33. Make clear to students that the important thing in learning a foreign language is to communicate meaning effectively rather than worrying about grammar mistakes.	5.208	1.116
S32. Use various authentic cultural products (e.g. magazines, newspapers, songs, commercials, ads, things) originally made for native speakers and not designed for foreign learners.	5.188	1.074
S38. Highlight the usefulness of FL/L2 and encourage your students to use it to communicate outside the classroom (e.g. internet chat room, social networks or communicating with foreign friends).	5.168	0.939
S04. Familiarise the learners with the cultural background of the target language.	5.139	0.980
S19. Invite some natives as guest speakers to the class.	4.663	1.321
S09. Regularly remind students that the successful mastery of the target language is beneficial to pursue their future goals (e.g. getting a better job or pursuing further studies abroad).	4.238	1.350
AVOID COMPARISON (single-item cluster): Avoid any comparison of students to one another	5.099	1.136
S41. Avoid any comparison amongst your students (e.g. comparing grades when posted in public).	5.099	1.136
GROUP (α = 0.803): Promote group works and activities that get all the students to be involved.	5.066	1.030
${\tt S24. Encourage student participation by assigning activities that require active involvement from each participant (e.g. group presentation or peer teaching).}$	5.188	0.833
S03. Create opportunities so that students can mix and get to know each other better (e.g. group work, game-like competition).	5.119	1.125
S35. Include activities that require students to work in groups towards the same goal (e.g. plan a drama performance) in order to promote cooperation among students.	4.891	1.095
SUPPORT (α = 0.835): Encourage students and help them to achieve their learning goals	4.821	1.218
S34. Show students that their effort and achievement are being recognised by you, and support them with positive feedback.	5.505	0.770
S28. Encourage learners to try harder by making it clear that you believe that they can do the tasks.	5.109	1.139
${\tt S06. Give clear instructions about how to carry out a task by modelling every step that students will need to do.}$	4.851	1.244
${\tt S15. Make sure grades reflect not only the students' achievement but also the effort they have put into in the task.}$	4.842	1.027
S40. Share with students that you value FL/L2 learning as a meaningful experience that produces satisfaction and which enriches your life.	4.743	1.301
S08. Constantly monitor students' accomplishments and take time to celebrate any success or victory.	4.733	1.174
S42. Encourage learners to see that the main reason for most failure is not their poor abilities, but rather that they did not make sufficient effort or that they set unrealistic goals.	4.545	1.285
S07. Invite senior or former students to talk to your class about their positive language learning experiences, so that they can share their enthusiasm.	4.238	1.328
BE YOURSELF (single-item cluster): Act naturally in front of students	4.812	1.247
S46. Try to be yourself in front of students without putting on an artificial 'mask', and share with them your hobbies, passions, likes and dislikes.	4.812	1.247
SHARE EXPERIENCE (single-item cluster): Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts	4.693	1.037
S44. Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts as part of the learning tasks.	4.693	1.037
RESPONSIBILIZATION (α = 0.872): Help students to be autonomous and responsible for their own learning	4.383	1.328
S37. Adopt the role of a 'facilitator' (i.e. your role would be to help and lead your students to think and learn in their own way, instead of solely giving knowledge to them).	5.218	1.073

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S36. Teach students various learning techniques that will make their learning easier and more effective.	4.802	1.132
S25. Integrate your explanation giving good reasons to students as to why a particular activity is meaningful or important for language learning.	4.693	1.147
S20. Help the students develop realistic beliefs about their learning (e.g. explain to them realistically the amount of time needed for making real progress; what are the main hurdles for students; what is the real importance of pronunciation, grammar or comprehension).	4.663	1.125
S10. Encourage students to select specific, realistic and short-term learning goals for themselves (e.g. learning 5 words every day).	4.614	1.140
S47. Give students opportunities to assess themselves (e.g. give themselves marks according to their overall performance).	4.307	1.294
$S14. \ Teach the students self-motivating strategies (e.g. self-encouragement, future vision of themselves, study rituals, etc.) so as to keep them motivated when they encounter distractions.\\$	4.178	1.367
S31. Display the 'class goals' where they can be seen and review them regularly in terms of individual and common progress made towards them.	4.089	1.327
S22. Involve students as much as possible in designing and running the language course (e.g. provide them with opportunities to select the textbooks; make real choices about the activities and topics they are going to cover; decide whom they would like to work with).	3.673	1.342
S29. Give students choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed/evaluated.	3.594	1.415
RULES (α = 0.802): Establish a set of classroom rules that students agree upon	4.490	1.343
S05. Explain the importance of the 'class rules' that you regard as important (e.g. let's not make fun of each other's mistakes) and how these rules enhance learning, and then ask for the students' agreement.	4.752	1.322
S16. Ask learners to think of any classroom rules that they would like to recommend because they think those will be useful for their learning and to create the optimal class environment.	4.228	1.318

Appendix 2 Macrostrategies with constituent items from the teachers' experience section of the questionnaire (N = 101). For each item we report the percentages of responses for the main channel through which the teachers acquainted through the response of the percentages of the main channel through the response of the percentages of the percentage of the pthemselves with each motivational strategy (the original questionnaire was written in Italian)

	Main channel of acquisition of each strategy				
Macrostrategies and constituent items		Personal baggage	Education	Experience	
CLIMATE (α = 0.738): Create a friendly and pleasant atmosphe	re in the cla	assroom			
S23. Establish a good relationship with your students.	2,97%	62,38%	3,96%	30,69%	
S30. Create a supportive and pleasant classroom climate where students are free from embarrassment and ridicule.	1,98%	54,46%	10,89%	32,67%	
S02. Show students that you respect, accept and care about each of them.	1,98%	59,41%	4,95%	33,66%	
S01. Bring in and encourage humour and laughter frequently in your class.	2,97%	47,52%	4,95%	44,55%	
INTEREST (α = 0.851): Make the tasks more stimulating, engage	ging and en	joyable			
S18. Break the routine of the lessons by varying presentation					
format (e.g. a grammar task can be followed by one focusing on	0,00%	17,82%	35,64%	46,53%	
$\label{pronunciation} pronunciation; a whole-class lecture can be followed by group work).$					
S12. Introduce in your lessons various interesting content and					
topics which students are likely to find interesting (e.g. about TV	0,99%	28,71%	26,73%	43,56%	
programmes, music, celebrities or travelling).					
S45. Enrich the channel of communication by presenting various					
auditory and visual aids such as pictures, listenings, videos, films,	0,99%	13,86%	46,53%	38,61%	
magazines, websites, etc.					
S43. Make tasks attractive by including novel or fantasy elements so	1,98%	18,81%	35,64%	43,56%	
as to raise the learners' curiosity.	1,3070	10,01%	33,04%	43,30%	

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S11. Design tasks and homework that are within the learners' ability so that they get to experience success regularly.	5,94%	12,87%	40,59%	40,59%
S26. Try and find out about your students' needs, goals and interests,		-		
and then build these into your curriculum as much as possible.	6,93%	21,78%	28,71%	42,57%
S27. Allow students to create products that they can display or				
perform (e.g. a poster, an information brochure, a school newspaper,	6,93%	11,88%	40,59%	40,59%
a radio programme etc.).				
S13. Make tasks and homework challenging by including some				
activities that require students to solve problems or discover	9,90%	7,92%	40,59%	41,58%
something (e.g. puzzles).				
S21. Use short and interesting opening activities to start each class	10,89%	11,88%	42,57%	34,65%
(e.g. fun games).				
L2 VALUES (α = 0.733): Promote the interest toward the target	language a	and its relat	ed cultural va	lues
S39. Motivate your students by increasing the amount of FL/L2 you	1,98%	30,69%	19,80%	47,52%
use in class.				,-=,-
S17. Show your enthusiasm for language teaching by being	4,95%	59,41%	3,96%	31,68%
committed and dedicated.	.,,50 /0			
S33. Make clear to students that the important thing in learning a				
foreign language is to communicate meaning effectively rather than	3,96%	27,72%	33,66%	34,65%
worrying about grammar mistakes.				
S32. Use various authentic cultural products (e.g. magazines,				
newspapers, song, commercials, ads, things) originally made for	1,98%	14,85%	40,59%	42,57%
native speakers and not designed for foreign learners.				
S38. Highlight the usefulness of FL/L2 and encourage your students				
to use it to communicate outside the classroom (e.g. internet chat	5,94%	32,67%	16,83%	44,55%
room, social networks or communicating with foreign friends).				
S04. Familiarise the learners with the cultural background of the	1,98%	26,73%	28,71%	42,57%
target language.	1,3070	20,1370	20,1170	12,51 70
S19. Invite some native as guest speakers to the class.	29,70%	15,84%	16,83%	37,62%
S09. Regularly remind students that the successful mastery of the				
target language is beneficial to pursue their future goals (e.g. getting	18,81%	33,66%	9,90%	37,62%
a better job or pursuing further studies abroad).				
AVOID COMPARISON (single-item cluster): Avoid any comparis	on of stud	ents to one a	another	
S41. Avoid any comparison amongst your students (e.g. comparing	11,88%	43,56%	9,90%	24 650%
grades when posted in public).	11,0070	43,3070	9,90%	34,65%
GROUP (α = 0.803): Promote group works and activities that get all the	students to	be involved.		
S24. Encourage student participation by assigning activities that				
require active involvement from each participant (e.g. group	1,98%	20,79%	32,67%	44,55%
presentation or peer teaching).				
S03. Create opportunities so that students can mix and get to know	F 0.40/	17.020/	26.620/	20.000/
each other better (e.g. group work, game-like competition).	5,94%	17,82%	36,63%	39,60%
S35. Include activities that require students to work in groups				
towards the same goal (e.g. plan a drama performance) in order to	6,93%	7,92%	49,50%	35,64%
promote cooperation among students.				
SUPPORT (α = 0.835): Encourage students and help them to ac	hieve their	learning go	als	
S34. Show students that their effort and achievement are being	2.070/	45 5 40/	11.000/	20.000/
recognized by you, and support them with positive feedback.	2,97%	45,54%	11,88%	39,60%
recognized by you, and support them with positive recuback.				
S28. Encourage learners to try harder by making it clear that you	3,96%	49,50%	4,95%	41,58%

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S06. Give clear instructions about how to carry out a task by modelling every step that students will need to do.	0,99%	15,84%	31,68%	51,49%
S15. Make sure grades reflect not only the students' achievement but also the effort they have put into in the task.	3,96%	28,71%	19,80%	47,52%
S40. Share with students that you value FL/L2 learning as a meaningful experience that produces satisfaction and which enriches your life.	7,92%	52,48%	9,90%	29,70%
S08. Constantly monitor students' accomplishments, and take time to celebrate any success or victory.	11,88%	24,75%	16,83%	46,53%
S42. Encourage learners to see that the main reason for most failure is not their poor abilities, but rather that they did not make sufficient effort or that they set unrealistic goals.	15,84%	33,66%	14,85%	35,64%
S07. Invite senior or former students to talk to your class about their positive language learning experiences, so that they can share their enthusiasm.	37,62%	12,87%	15,84%	33,66%
BE YOURSELF (single-item cluster): Act naturally in front of studer	its		,	
S46. Try to be yourself in front of students without putting on an artificial 'mask', and share with them your hobbies, passions, likes and dislikes.	8,91%	54,46%	3,96%	32,67%
SHARE EXPERIENCE (single-item cluster): Encourage student	s to share p	ersonal exp	eriences and	thoughts
S44. Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts as part of the learning tasks.	9,90%	24,75%	12,87%	52,48%
RESPONSIBILIZATION (α = 0.872): Help students to be autono	mous and r	esponsible	for their own	learning
S37. Adopt the role of a 'facilitator' (i.e. your role would be to help and lead your students to think and learn in their own way, instead of solely giving knowledge to them).	5,94%	27,72%	38,61%	27,72%
S36. Teach students various learning techniques that will make their learning easier and more effective.	12,87%	11,88%	47,52%	27,72%
S25. Integrate your explanation giving good reasons to students as to why a particular activity is meaningful or important for language learning.	5,94%	19,80%	33,66%	40,59%
S20. Help the students develop realistic beliefs about their learning (e.g. explain to them realistically the amount of time needed for making real progress; what are the main hurdles for students; what is the real importance of pronunciation, grammar or comprehension).	7,92%	14,85%	23,76%	53,47%
S10. Encourage students to select specific, realistic and short-term learning goals for themselves (e.g. learning 5 words every day).	10,89%	10,89%	41,58%	36,63%
S47. Give students opportunities to assess themselves (e.g. give themselves marks according to their overall performance).	29,70%	11,88%	36,63%	21,78%
S14. Teach the students self-motivating strategies (e.g. self-encouragement, future vision of themselves, study rituals, etc.) so as to keep them motivated when they encounter distractions.	31,68%	9,90%	38,61%	19,80%
S31. Display the 'class goals' where they can be seen and review them regularly in terms of individual and common progress made towards them.	45,54%	4,95%	30,69%	18,81%
S22. Involve students as much as possible in designing and running the language course (e.g. provide them with opportunities to select the textbooks; make real choices about the activities and topics they are going to cover; decide whom they would like to work with).	29,70%	8,91%	20,79%	40,59%

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S29. Give students choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed/evaluated.	42,57%	6,93%	22,77%	27,72%
RULES (α = 0.802): Establish a set of classroom rules that stu	dents agree	upon	,	
S05. Explain the importance of the 'class rules' that you regard as important (e.g. let's not make fun of each other's mistakes) and how these rules enhance learning, and then ask for the students' agreement.	19,80%	14,85%	22,77%	42,57%
S16. Ask learners to think of any classroom rules that they would like to recommend because they think those will be useful for their learning and to create the optimal class environment.	34,65%	9,90%	21,78%	33,66%